

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 /057 W
-----068380 120134Z /15

R 100837Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2864
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MY
SUBJECT: KELANTAN ELECTIONS

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 1658

1. SUMMARY: AS ELECTIONEERING DRAWS TO A CLOSE FOLLOWING 2 1/2 WEEKS OF CAMPAIGNING FOR 36 STATE ASSEMBLY SEATS AT STAKE IN TOMORROW'S (MARCH 11) KELANTAN STATE ELECTIONS, FEW OBSERVERS ARE WILLING TO PREDICT THE OUTCOME, MOST RATING IT A "TOSS-UP" BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC PARTY (PAS) ON ONE HAND AND ITS RIVALS, THE NATIONAL FRONT (NF) (READ UMNO) AND NEWLY FORMED BERJASA PARTY, ON THE OTHER. END SUMMARY.

2. NUMEROUS NATIONAL FRONT LUMINARIES, INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN, HAVE VISITED KELANTAN
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SINCE NOMINATIONS CLOSED FEB. 23 TO STUMP ON BEHALF OF NF AND BERJASA CANDIDATES. NF'S BASIC CAMPAIGN THEME IS THAT YEARS OF CONTROL OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT BY PAS HAVE PROVED THE "EMPTYNESS" OF PAS PROMISES AND ITS INABILITY TO DELIVER THE GOODS. A NF VICTORY ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL ASSURE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ATTEN-

TION TO KELANTAN'S DEVELOPMENT NEEDS (THE REVERSE IMPLICATION BEING THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD NOT BE SO FORTHCOMING IF PAS WINS CONTROL OF THE STATE). GOM OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO ANNOUNCED A NUMBER OF NEW DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS IN THE COURSE OF THEIR VISITS.

3. PAS HAS SOUGHT TO COUNTER THESE ARGUMENTS BY CONTENDING THAT IF IT WINS CONTROL OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT IT WILL ENDEAVOR TO MAINTAIN GOOD TIES WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, ADDING THAT A NUMBER OF THE NEW PROGRAMS ANNOUNCED HAD BEEN CONCEIVED WHILE PAS WAS STILL IN THE NATIONAL FRONT COALITION. PAS' BASIC THEM IS THAT ITS OBJECTIVE IS NOT RPT NOT SOLELY TO GAIN POLITICAL POWER BUT RATHER TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE BUMIPUTRAS (MALAYS) AND TO UPHOLD ISLAM. BERJASA ON ITS PART HAS SOUGHT TO WOO VOTERS WITH ITS ISLAMIC CREDENTIALS AND ITS ADVOCACY OF HONEST GOVERNMENT.

4. ALTHOUGH MASS RALLIES AND USE OF LOUDSPEAKERS HAVE BEEN BANNED, SIZEABLE MEETINGS BILLED AS "DIALOGUE" SESSIONS WITH ATTENDANCE IN THE HUNDREDS HAVE BEEN HELD. MUCH OF THE CAMPAIGNING, HOWEVER, HAS TAKEN, THE FORM OF DOOR-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO-DOOR CANVASSING. UNSURPRISINGLY, GOVERNMENT MEDIA, INCLUDING TV AND RADIO, HAVE GIVEN HEAVY COVERAGE TO NF AND BERJASA CANDIDATES, AS HAS GOVERNMENT INFLUENCED PRESS. MASS CIRCULATION ENGLISH DAILY NEW STRAITS TIMES (NST), AS HAS BEEN ITS STANDARD PRACTICE, CONTINUES TO GIVE PARTICULARLY FAVORABLE COVERAGE TO ACTIVITIES AND REMARKS OF TENGKU RAZALEIGH, NOW IN HIS CURRENT GUISE AS NF CAMPAIGN CHIEF IN KELANTAN. IN ADDITION TO BOOSTING RAZALEIGH PERSONALLY, THE NST HAS CONSISTENTLY LAUDED THE NF, DECLARING IN A MARCH 10 EDITORIAL THAT "WHILE ANY PARTY CAN PROMISE, ONLY THE FRONT CAN REALLY ELIVER. A VOTE FOR THE FRONT IS THEREFORE A VOTE FOR DEVELOPMENT; A VOTE FOR PAS, STAGNATION." ONLY KHIR JOHARI'S RENEGADE BILINGUAL (MALAY-ENGLISH) DAILY "WATAN" SHOWS ANY SIGN OF FAVORITISM TO PAS, AND EVEN THIS IS MUTED (KHIR IS AN UMNO MP).

5. DESPITE THE NATIONAL FRONT'S "BIG GUNS" COUNT PAS PUT, POINTING TO THE FACT THAT KELANTAN HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN A PAS STATE.

FURTHERMORE, PAS HAS THE SUPPORT OF IMPORTANT
AUTHORITY FIGURES AT THE GRASS ROOTS LEVEL
(RELIGIOUS TEACHERS) AND A PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION
WITH ISLAM IN THIS RELIGIOUSLY ORTHODOX STATE.
BERJASA'S ENTRY INTO THE FRAY ALSO COMPLICATES
THE EQUATION, SINCE NO ONE REALLY SEEMS TO KNOW
WHETHER BERJASA CANDIDATES WILL CUT
INTO VOTES FOR PAS OR UMNO.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTIONS, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KUALA02054
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780110-0208
Format: TEL
From: KUALA LUMPUR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780383/aaaacsko.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8aabacc9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KUALA LUMPUR 1658
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3375601
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KELANTAN ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8aabacc9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014